64TH CONGRESS, 1st Session. } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. { DOCUMENT No. 589.

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WICKFORD HARBOR, R. I.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT ON PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF WICKFORD HARBOR, R. I.

JANUARY 17, 1916.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed, with illustration.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 15, 1916.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated 14th instant, together with copy of a report from Col. John Millis, Corps of Engineers, dated November 5, 1915, with map, on preliminary examination of Wickford Harbor, R. I., made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act approved March 4, 1915.

Very respectfully,

LINDLEY M. GARRISON,
Secretary of War.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, January 14, 1916.

From: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army.
To: The Secretary of War.
Subject: Preliminary examination of Wickford Harbor, R. I.

1. There is submitted herewith for transmission to Congress report dated November 5, 1915, with map, by Col. John Millis, Corps of Engineers, on preliminary examination authorized by the river and harbor act approved March 4, 1915, of Wickford Harbor, R. I.

2. Wickford Harbor is on the west side of Narragansett Bay, about 21 miles by water south of Providence. It is on the opposite side of the bay from Newport, R. I., and is the point of transfer from steamboat to railroad in the most direct line between Newport and New York. Wickford is a small manufacturing town, and its raw materials and products are transported chiefly by rail. The commerce by water was reported in 1907 as 38,045 tons. But little interest has been manifested in the improvement of this harbor. The company operating the regular steamboat between Newport and Wickford states that at extreme low tide their boat occasionally touches bottom and that a greater area of deep water near its wharf would be beneficial. In the opinion of the district officer, the existing water facilities are sufficient for the commerce of the place, and he believes that the locality is not worthy of improvement by the General Government at this time. The division engineer concurs in this opinion.

3. This report has been referred, as required by law, to the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and attention is invited to its report herewith, dated December 7, 1915, concurring in the views of the district officer and the division engineer.

4. After due consideration of the above-mentioned reports, I concur in the views of the district officer, the division engineer, and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and therefore report that the improvement by the United States of Wickford Harbor, R. I., is not deemed advisable at the present time.

DAN C. KINGMAN,
Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS.

[Third indorsement.]

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,
December 7, 1915.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY.

1. The following is in review of the district officer's report authorized by the river and harbor act of March 4, 1915, on preliminary examination of "Wickford Harbor, R. I."

2. Wickford Harbor is on the west side of Narragansett Bay, about 21 miles south by water from Providence and 12 miles northwesterly from Newport Harbor. Appropriations aggregating $16,300 were expended prior to 1900 in the removal of bowlders and in securing a channel 9 feet deep at mean low water. No work has been done since.

3. Wickford is a small town engaged principally in the manufacture of cotton and woolen goods. The commerce was stated to be 38,045 tons in 1907. The present commerce is not given. Numerous inquiries of those believed to be interested resulted in one reply from the owners of the regular steamboat operating between Newport and Wickford, in which it was stated that the improvement desired was the deepening of the channel so that this boat, which has a draft of 7 to 8 feet, would not touch bottom as it has done at times at very low tide.

4. The district officer considers the existing water facilities fairly adequate for all the demands of commerce, and reports that the locality is not worthy of improvement by the General Government at this time. The division engineer is in accord with this view.

5. Interested parties were informed of the unfavorable report of the district officer and given an opportunity of submitting statements and arguments to the board, but no communications on the subject have been received.

6. From the information now available, it appears that the existing facilities are ample to meet all reasonable requirements of navigation. One boat is reported to have had some trouble on extreme low tides. The cost of the work necessary to provide against these infrequent conditions would be unduly expensive, and there is nothing further to indicate any real necessity for additional improvement. The board therefore concurs with the district officer and the division engineer in the opinion that it is not advisable for the United States to undertake the improvement of Wickford Harbor at this time.

7. In compliance with law, the board reports that there are no questions of terminal facilities, water power, or other related subjects which could be coordinated with the suggested improvement in such manner as to render the work advisable in the interests of commerce and navigation.

For the board:

W. M. Black,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Senior Member of the Board.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF WICKFORD HARBOR, R. I.

United States Engineer Office,
Newport, R. I., November 5, 1915.

From: The District Engineer Officer.
To: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army
(Through the Division Engineer).
Subject: Preliminary examination of Wickford Harbor, R. I.

1. Reference, circular letter office Chief of Engineers, March 15, 1915.

2. The river and harbor act of March 4, 1915, provides for the preliminary examination of Wickford Harbor, R. I.

3. Wickford Harbor is on the west side of Narragansett Bay, about 21 miles by water south from Providence, nearly midway between Providence and Point Judith Harbor. It is about 12 miles northwesterly from Newport Harbor and is the terminus of a short line of railroad connecting with the shore line of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad at Wickford Junction, and it is the point of transfer from steamboat to railroad in the most direct line between Newport, R. I., and New York.

4. In 1872 a report was submitted recommending the expenditure of $24,000 for the improvement of this harbor and its approaches (Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1873, p. 972). In 1873 and 1874 there was appropriated $10,000, which was expended in removing certain rocks and securing a channel of about 9 feet depth at mean low water up to the steamboat company's wharf.

In 1893 a report of a preliminary examination was submitted recommending a survey with a view to further improvement (Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1893, p. 873), and on September 14, 1895, the report of the survey (Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1895, p. 753) was submitted, with an estimate of $6,300 for works of improvement. This was appropriated in the river and harbor act of June 3, 1896, and expended in the removal of certain bowlders in the approaches to the harbor and in extending the channel from the steamboat wharf to the wharves of the town of Wickford, with a width of 60 feet and depth of 9 feet at mean low water. A further report of a preliminary examination and survey was submitted to Congress May 1, 1908, in response to a provision in the river and harbor act of March 2, 1907, authorizing the examination and survey of "Wickford Harbor with a view to obtaining a depth of 15 feet and for the removal of a ledge known as General Rock" (H. Doc. No. 905, 60th Cong., 1st sess.). In this report, as reviewed by the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, whose conclusion was concurred in by the Chief of Engineers, it was deemed that the harbor was worthy of improvement to the extent of expending $56,800 in deepening the channel to 15 feet depth from Wickford Light into Wickford Harbor. No appropriations have ever been made under this report and recommendation.

5. Wickford is a small manufacturing town in which some cotton and woolen mills are operated, the raw material and product of which is transported chiefly by rail. The commerce of Wickford by water in 1907 was reported as 38,045 tons, and the vessels using the harbor at 6,875, with a draft of from 3 to 15 feet.

6. Numerous inquiries were made from those believed to be interested in the improvement. The only response received was from the New England Steamship Co., which owns and operates the regular steamboat running between Newport and Wickford. The company states that at extreme low tide their boat occasionally touches bottom and that a greater area of deep water near its wharf would be beneficial.

7. The principal boat using the harbor is the *General*, operated by the above-named company and regularly running on the Newport and Wickford line. This boat is 130 feet long, 25 feet beam, and 9.4 feet deep, having a draft of between 7 and 8 feet. There are also occasional small coal barges and lumber vessels, which are brought in at high tide and allowed to rest on the soft mud bottom until unloaded, and several oyster dredgers and fishing vessels that use the harbor.

8. All the wharves in Wickford Harbor are privately owned and there are no public terminals. There are no questions of water power connected with the harbor.

9. In view of the pronounced lack of local interest in the matter of the improvement of this harbor it appears that the existing water facilities are sufficient for all the demands of the commerce of the place and that the few and somewhat unusual causes of inconvenience to the regularly running line are not of sufficient importance to warrant the expenditure necessary for their removal, I have to report that in my opinion the locality is not worthy of further improvement by the general Government at this time.

JOHN MILLIS,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers.

[First indorsement.]

DIVISION ENGINEER, NORTHEAST DIVISION,
New York City, November 8, 1915.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY.

Forwarded, concurring in the views and recommendation of the district engineer officer.

FREDERIC V. ABBOT,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Division Engineer.

[For report of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, see page 2.]

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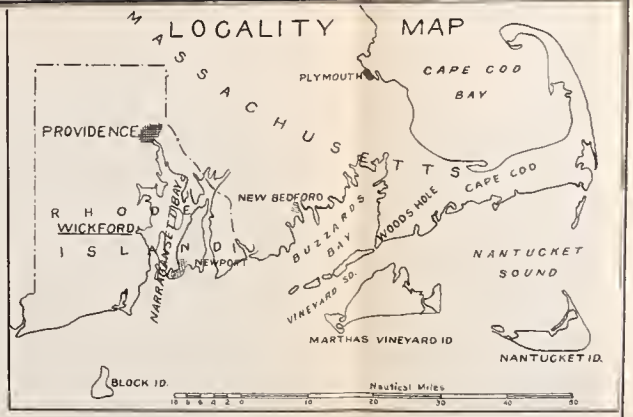
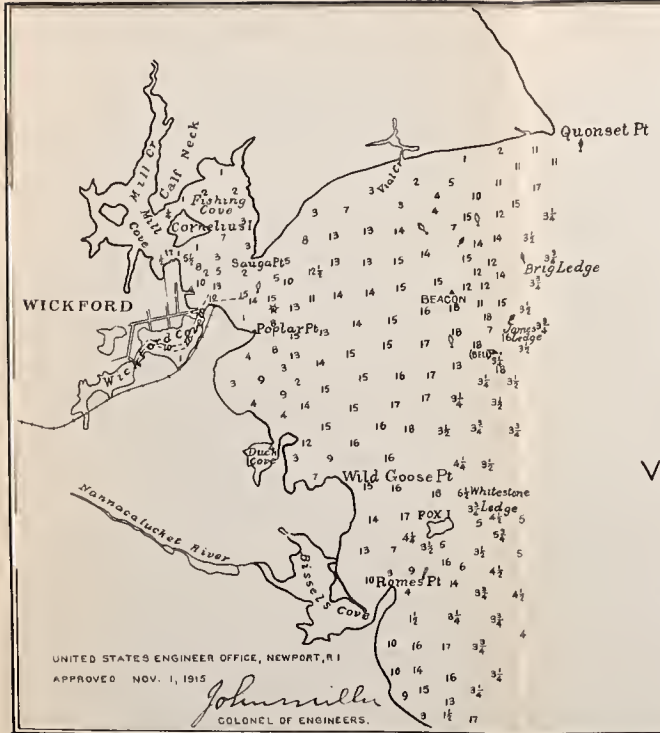
WAR DEPARTMENT

CORPS OF ENGINEERS, U.S. ARMY





VICINITY OF WICKFORD HARBOR, R.I.

from

U.S. C. & G. SURVEY CHART No. 353

Scale of Miles

House Doc. No. 589; 64th Cong., 1st Sess.